



Seton Home Study School

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Mary and Joseph

When we think about the feasts of March, we remember primarily about the feast of the Annunciation on March 25. From the Gospel of St. Luke, we read:

The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee called Nazareth to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary. And the angel said to her: “Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women.”

[Mary] Who having heard, was troubled at his saying and thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be, and the angel said to her, “Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shall bring forth a son; and thou shall call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the most High; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David his father; and he shall reign in the house of Jacob forever....”

“The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore, the holy [one] which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”

... And Mary said, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word.”

Mary’s instant readiness to accept the role and the unknown but great responsibilities of being the Mother of God gives us inspiration. She

encourages us to rely on her to help us home schooling parents to accept our responsibilities regarding the raising and education of our children. Like Mary, we can never see the future events and demands we might need to face.

St. Joseph, whose feast day is March 19, also was asked to accept God’s choice of Mary as the Mother of God. An angel appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Joseph, Son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her, is of the Holy Spirit. And she shall bring forth a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. For he shall save his people from their sins.”

“And Joseph, rising up from his sleep, did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him, and took unto him his wife. And he knew her not till she brought forth her firstborn son; and he called his name Jesus.”

Joseph’s immediate response to the words of God from the angel gives home schooling fathers a source of help and support from the foster father of Jesus. The angel is reminding Joseph to focus on the Baby, even naming him before He is born. Through the angel, God the Father teaches Joseph and all fathers that children come from God, that their existence comes by the love and power of God. God the Father teaches us through St. Joseph what fathers are called to do: care for their babies and wives rather than be concerned about themselves. Even in the midst of great uncertainty and deep chaos, fathers must depend on Joseph.

Joseph led Mary and Baby Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem to be blessed by

the priest and by the holy man Simeon. Later, an angel appeared to Joseph at night, and told him to escape to Egypt since King Herod was determined to murder Baby Jesus. Joseph rose immediately, moving quickly and decisively, out of the house and traveling by donkey to an unfamiliar foreign land. Joseph never hesitated to take his family in the dark of night through desert land to Egypt. Joseph, trusting the ways of the Lord, remained in Egypt until an angel appeared to tell him he should return to Nazareth.

The month of March is a good time to think about the holy family and the unique raising of Jesus by Mary and Joseph. This is a good time to ask Mary and Joseph to help us in raising our own children to be Christ-like in what they think and say and do. We must teach our children that, like Mary and Joseph, our business here on Earth is to be obedient to the Will of God, even in—perhaps especially in—the most difficult times of uncertainty.

Remember, O gracious Virgin Mary and St. Joseph, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thy intercession, was left unaided. Pray for us.

- MKC

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Questions We Are Asked
 by *Dr. Mary Kay Clark*
 Director, *Seton Home Study School*

I am so busy with the younger children, I am trying to have the older children follow the directions in the lesson plans.

We need to be careful about the children reading the lesson plans and doing their lessons without daily oversight by parents. Certainly most high school students should be given more responsibility, but younger children need close direction and supervision. Even high school students need fairly close oversight. Sometimes high school students will report that everything is progressing just fine, but parents find out later that all is not as it should be.

One thing some families are doing is having Dad be responsible for overseeing the work each evening for the high school students. Mom should certainly remind the students about their work, and answer questions, but Dad would be their main teacher.

If parents can't supervise enough, consider having older children supervise younger children. If that's not possible, then consider asking for help from relatives, or a retired teacher, or perhaps an interested person from your parish. Someone could come in once or twice a week to listen to a younger one read or help with math.

It seems like we are home schooling even after dinner. What is a reasonable amount of time to spend home schooling?

There are different ways of looking at this. First, how much time do you think is reasonable for the children's assignments? If the major subjects are taking up the normal school-day time, perhaps science and history could be moved to the weekend. Secondly, some things are normally done in the evening by students who are in a school classroom, such as reading for

book reports. Doing homework or schoolwork in the evening is not really unusual. Some children read in their beds for a half-hour before going to sleep. Thirdly, these years when the children are growing up are essential for the children to learn. Education should actually be happening all the time, in some form or another. Perhaps there are some subjects which are not as intense for a particular child that might be done in the evening, such as music lessons.

You also should look at how time is spent during the day. Are the children actually working on their studies, or mostly wasting time? It is amazing how quickly students are able to finish their work when a trip to the park or the swimming pool hangs in the balance. If you can work out some incentives on a daily, weekly, and quarterly basis, you may find yourselves spending much less time while getting much more done.

Finally, do you have a schedule, and do you (more or less) stick to it? If you don't have a schedule, you need to make one. You need to have a time for waking up, for eating, for getting dressed, and for starting on schoolwork. You can always make adjustments, but having a schedule is crucial for success.

With most of the year gone, what should I focus on for the last quarter of the school year?

At this time of the year, you should look ahead for the projects, such as book reports, that are coming up. As the weather changes to attract the children to run outside, they will want to focus on shorter assignments, not longer assignments. Consider having the children do more now with longer assignments, and explain that as the days become spring-like, they can do the shorter assignments.

What do you consider the most important thing to be successful with home schooling?

Practicing the Faith, living the Faith every day with your children is the most important thing for successful home schooling. The children need to see Catholic home schooling as a commitment to God, to live the life that He has called us to live. We are all called to be saints, and our children need to understand that.

When families enroll their older children, especially those in high school, we emphasize that the students need to understand what Catholic

If you can work out some incentives, you may find yourselves spending much less time while getting much more done.

home schooling is all about. Sometimes we tell parents who are struggling with rebellious children to cut down on the academics and do more with Catholic upbringing. Children who are resistant to schooling usually are resistant to obedience in general. Parents need not only to attend daily Mass, and to say the daily Rosary, but also to start and end the day with prayer, to spend more time with the catechism lessons with family discussions.

Parents should take the children to events related to the Church year. With Easter coming up, make a point of attending Stations of the Cross, Good Friday services, Holy Saturday services, and all that is available during Lent and in the Easter season.

Really important is that the family goes to confession as a family. The Church recommends once a month, but in a family with rebellious children, it should be every week. Help your children with their confessions, remind them of the back talk or disobedience or whatever, as relevant.

Be sure to take your children to other things going on at the parish,

such as Baptisms, First Communions, Confirmation, weddings, funerals. All these things can impress students to have a more thorough view of Catholic life and the purpose of life.

Seton sells several books by Catholics on discipline. If you go to the Seton website, click on Book Catalog, then search for Discipline, you will find practical advice by a home schooling father, Dr. Ray Guarandi, in his book *Discipline that Lasts a Lifetime*; *Family Bonding Through Discipline* by Father Fox and parents; *Legacy: A Father's Handbook for Raising Godly Children*, by home schooling father Stephen Wood.

Seton recommends that parents and students research potential colleges of choice during the 8th grade.

What are the requirements for a Seton diploma and for college acceptance?

Seton highly recommends that parents and students research potential colleges of choice during the 8th grade. Different colleges have different requirements, which can be determined either through online research or by calling the admissions office. Parents and students want to make sure that the student's courses over the high school years will meet the expectations of those colleges. Seton's curriculum is based on the majority of what colleges expect, but each college may have different requirements.

Once you have spoken with the admissions counselor at the college, you may want to contact one of our guidance counselors, either Mr. McGuiirk or Mr. Wiesner. They can help work out the schedule of courses for the high school curriculum.

High school students should be taking the standardized tests, the ACT or the SAT, starting at least in 10th grade, even in 9th grade. These scores are important to the college admissions department. The student can take them for practice the first and second time,

and not send the results to the colleges until you believe your student has done his best.

Although it is certainly possible for students to be accepted into a college without graduating from a formal program, we believe that students graduating from Seton have many advantages. Seton is accredited by the same regional agencies who accredit colleges, so a Seton diploma is seen by colleges as having value. Because Seton is one of the largest Catholic high schools in the United States, college admissions officers know the Seton name. Plus, if a college has any concerns about courses, we are happy to contact them directly to answer questions.

I feel a commitment to help at the parish and be involved with the pro-life events, but I'm afraid this might take away from my home schooling.

Years go by faster than you would like, but you don't realize it on a

daily basis. The parish will be there when the children are grown. If there are parish events for children, then certainly be involved with them. As for pro-life events, try to limit those to ones which can be attended by your children as well. Children have much to learn by being involved in a pro-life demonstration, the major one being to stand up publicly for what you believe.

People who do not understand home schooling often worry about the socialization of home schooling students. We find, however, that the problem is sometimes the over-abundance of socialization. There are so many activities—sports, music, volunteer work, parties, etc.—in the home school community that the academic lessons suffer. Children do need exercise, but being out several nights a week with activities will cause children to have less focus on their studies, and perhaps even be too tired to do their schoolwork.

Technology Update

Every other day, it seems some new gadget hits the market promising to solve every problem that ever existed. While we all know the hype usually far exceeds reality, some of the new technologies may hold promise for home schooling families. Over the past year, Seton has explored a few of these new technologies that may be of interest to you and your family.

One item of particular note is we have transitioned two of our publications to electronic format using Kindle. We have been pleased with the results and will proceed with making a few more titles available in the coming months.

We are also looking at new methods to communicate with our families and students. We have started Facebook pages for the school and the bookstore. If you are on Facebook, we have a link on our homepage to "friend" us. You can also expect to see a redesign of our main website with improved navigation and quick links to important and

commonly used areas of our website. Also, if you have high school students, be sure to look for our latest quarterly newsletter, *The Bayley Bulletin*, which has an online version in development. You can find links for the latest edition through our admissions page of the Seton website.

For currently enrolled families you may notice a few new items in your lesson plans and on MySeton. New videos and audio lectures are being produced regularly and posted on MySeton for many subjects and grade levels. Click on the video lecture icons through your student's MySeton account and enjoy.

We would love to hear from you. Please feel free to share your experiences with anything that we have implemented recently or if there are technologies that you use and like that you think may be beneficial to other home schooling families, share it on Facebook or send us an email at info@setonhome.org.

Ever Ancient, Ever New by Dr. Mitchell Kalpakgian

These articles will cite famous advice, wise proverbs, and prudent counsel as they appear in the classics of literature, in the words of famous characters from the good and great books of Western civilization, and in the published letters of noble men and women. Some articles will examine the world's bad or worst advice, for example, Polonius's words of wisdom to his son Laertes in *Hamlet*, as falsehoods that mislead. Because true wisdom, in Augustine's words, is "ever ancient" and "ever new," this treasury of the world's knowledge, "the collected reason of ages" deposited in "the general bank and capital of nations, and of ages," to quote from Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, will hopefully speak to many modern minds and hearts.

In Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*, Meg, the oldest of the March sisters, has happily married and given birth to twins, Demi and Daisy. A dedicated, loving woman with a strong sense of the vocation of motherhood, Meg soon finds herself enervated and exhausted from the duties of caring for children and managing a home: "As she was a womanly little woman, the maternal instinct was very strong, and she was entirely absorbed in her children, to the utter exclusion of everything and everybody else."

Because Meg is preoccupied and overtired, she finds no energy for conversation with her husband John even when he returns home for the evening. John, feeling like "a paternal exile," begins to spend more time with neighbors where he enjoys friendship, plays chess, and hears the piano. When Meg complains to her mother that she feels like a neglected woman, even "a widow," Mrs. March responds, "Don't you neglect him?" Mother then gives daughter the benefit of her own experience. She explains that Meg, forgetting her duty to her husband in her love for her children, has created an unnecessary imbalance in her married

life: "for children should draw you nearer than ever, not separate you, as if they were all yours, and John had nothing to do but support them."

Mrs. March chides her daughter for always being in the nursery and never emotionally available for her husband, "a very natural but forgivable mistake" that needs correction. Meg does not seek the help of her husband, imagining it as an admission of weakness and a failure of duty on her part. She cautions Meg of the consequences of work without play and recreation, insisting "You need the exercise." The mother notices the state of her daughter's nerves and the neglect of her appearance: "too much confinement makes you nervous, and then you are unfitted for everything." Mrs. March urges her daughter to have a social life and not neglect her basic needs as a woman and as a human being: "Go out more, keep cheerful as well as busy, for you are the sunshine maker of the family, and if you get dismal there is no fair weather."

Just as Meg needs to correct the imbalances in her life to make herself more pleasant, attractive, and composed to create the atmosphere of "sunshine" in the home, John needs to assist his wife in every humble way so that she can reign in the home as a queen rather than be a slave to work and a captive to children. Mrs. March urges Meg to involve her husband in the domestic sphere in order to play his vital part as father of the family. A father belongs in the nursery and home in every way, Mrs. March counsels Meg: "His place is there as well as yours, and the children need him; let him feel he has his part to do, and he will do it gladly and faithfully, and it will be better for you all." A woman must create an attractive, hospitable, pleasant atmosphere that makes the home the most inviting place of all, but she cannot perform this beautiful art of homemaking without ordering her life in a rhythm that balances work and play, domestic life and social life, and time for children, time for husband, and time for herself.

Mrs. March's advice shows that the welcoming atmosphere of the home depends on the cheerful disposition of the mother and that the state of a woman's mind and spirits depends on the cooperation and willingness of her husband to relieve her of the burden of work that becomes Herculean labor for one person. As she reflects on the happiness of her marriage, Mrs. March offers her choicest wisdom to Meg: "That is the secret of our home happiness: he does not let business wean him from the little cares and duties that affect us all, and I try not to let domestic worries destroy my interest in his pursuits. Each do our part alone in many things, but at home we work together always."

Imbalance is the bane of family life and domestic peace. At least one evening a week, a woman should not have to worry about cooking or housework. Instead she deserves to enjoy the pleasure of some social or cultural event with her husband in which she can feel and dress like a woman and enrich her mind and spirit in the company of others outside of her home. All persons need to be "re-created" and step outside of the routine of their daily toil. If husbands want cheerful homes and happy marriages, they must initiate these occasions for the sanity and delight of their wives. As St. Thomas Aquinas taught, "No man can live without pleasure."

With a few simple changes, Meg transformed her irritable, disgruntled mood from domestic drudge to a lighthearted sunshine maker. Mrs. March knew all the benefits that would follow if Meg would take these suggestions to heart: "Try it and see if he doesn't find your society far more agreeable than Mrs. Scott's suppers." A woman's world may be her domestic kingdom, but she also needs the stimulation and variety of participating in a larger world and broadening her interests: "Don't shut yourself up in a bandbox because you are a woman, but understand what is going on, and educate yourself to take part in the world's work, for it all affects you and yours."

Attitude

by Deacon Gene McGuirk

A basketball coach had a meeting with a player who was not performing well and asked him, "What is the problem with you? Is it ignorance or apathy?" The player replied, "Coach, I don't know and I don't care."

Obviously this short, humorous story makes a point for all involved in education, but particularly for home schoolers. The primary purpose of all education is to overcome ignorance, or to advance in knowledge and wisdom. Home schooling is no exception to this. Catholic parents believe that God has elevated them in sacramental marriage for the purpose of begetting *and educating* children. However, it sometimes happens that a child does not have the best attitude towards acquiring this education.

There are many reasons why a child might have troubles with schoolwork: because of specific learning disabilities, or because materials are too advanced for the student, or even because there are too many distractions. However, attitude plays a very large role in each student's success or failure. A student with a bad attitude will rarely be successful.

How can a bad attitude be changed to a good attitude?

Like so much else, this is at base a religious issue. If it is a major duty of parents to teach, then the major duty in the life of the child is to learn. For some children, and for some subjects, this is easy. But if students are to learn all that they must learn, it will not always be easy, because they will need to study areas which are difficult for them or which do not greatly interest them. Students must develop their will power to persevere beyond the difficulties that might be hindering their learning. This exercise of will power is, in itself, a form of education, because it is training the will to overcome difficulties so that

it can fight through the ever greater temptations that come with advances in age and responsibility in life.

The motto of the Boy Scouts of America starts with "I will do my best, to do my duty, to God and my country ..." There are three major points in the brief beginning of this motto. The first is to do your best. It does not say "I will do enough to get by" or "I will do as much as I feel like doing." It calls upon the self control and self mastery to work at doing the best possible. The second point is that this best is directed toward doing "my duty." Duty is usually imposed by the orders of those in authority. Duty is not what I feel like doing, or what I want to do, no, duty is what I must do because someone in authority has commanded it. The third point tells us who commanded this duty. God did.

Lest you think that this mandate to do your duty and do your best is just for little children in short pants, consider the motto of the United States Military Academy at West Point which is "Duty, Honor, Country." Note the similarity. The officer-in-training pledges his very honor to do his duty. A man's honor and good name require him to do his best, or his good name and honor will be reduced. So the ideal at West Point is also to do your best, to do your duty for your country.

There is an even higher example than this. Our Lord Jesus Christ was sent by God the Father on a mission to fallen mankind. Jesus, the honorable, dutiful Son, accepted this charge and obeyed His Father. Jesus proclaimed "I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him that *sent me...*" (John 6:38) Jesus acknowledged that His mission was to die on the cross. Jesus indicated this to His disciples when He told them: "When you shall have

lifted up the Son of man, then shall you know, that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself, but as the Father hath taught me, these things I speak: And *he that sent me*, is with me, and he hath not left me alone: for I do always the things that please him" (John 8:28-29).

Jesus told us that He is the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6). By proclaiming Himself as the Way, Jesus was telling us that we must always follow His example. Since He obeyed and did His best to fulfill His mission, each student must do his duty by obeying his parents and persevering with his school work.

Although it is a student's duty to learn, it will never be enough merely to follow duty. A soldier may pledge to do his duty, but to do it well, he must be convinced that his duty is right and good and worth doing. A soldier who does his duty out of obligation will never be as good as a soldier who does his duty out of love for his country.

What would we say of a father who provides for his children only because of duty, and not because of love? We might praise him as dutiful, but surely we would pity his attitude.

In the same way, a student who approaches his studies only out of duty is missing a necessary component to real success. A Catholic student is preparing himself for time and for eternity, and both this world and the next are worth his devotion. The Seton program is designed to create well-educated students who can be leaders in the world. As young men in medieval days spent years preparing for knighthood, so Catholic students in grade school and high school are preparing themselves to enter the fray, in a world which no longer shares the student's values. The more a student understands the importance of a Catholic education—and loves the goals of that education—the more successful the student will be.

Television and Lent

by John Clark

With Ash Wednesday fast approaching, many home schooling families are revisiting their annual question: “What should we give up for Lent?” While there are many worthwhile answers to the question, there may be no better candidate than television.

Those of my parent’s generation might comment that this would be no big loss, since television is so bad today anyway. They might ask: “Why can’t television be like it used to, when it was good?” Of course, there’s a problem with this question, because truth compels one to admit that television has *never* been that good. True, the 1950s introduced some good shows such as *I Love Lucy*, *The Jack Benny Show*, *You Bet Your Life*, and *The Twilight Zone*. Then again, it gave the world *Kukla, Fran, and Ollie* and *My Mother the Car*.

From its earliest days, television was a victim of its own design. Hours of programming were forced into the otherwise-dead airwaves. It didn’t matter whether the programming was worth watching or not; something—*anything*—desperately had to occupy these times slots. This fact was not lost on everyone. An FCC Chairman once commented that if you sat down to watch television, you would see “blood and thunder, mayhem, violence, sadism, murder, western bad men, western good men, private eyes, gangsters, more violence, and cartoons. And endless commercials — many screaming, cajoling, and offending. And most of all, boredom.” These comments were not made in 2011—they were made in 1961.

When you consider shows like *The Beverly Hillbillies*, *Flipper*, *The Munsters*, and *Gilligan’s Island*, you get his point. I understand that they’re not attempting to do Shakespeare quality, but these shows fail in comparison to

the less-than-exacting standards of a Little Theatre casting call.

There has always been a clamor for more children’s and family shows, but when I was growing up, these shows were not that good, either. Granted, the puppet government in the “Neighborhood of Make Believe” on *Mister Rogers Neighborhood* gave American children a healthy introduction to the concept of monarchy, but King Friday was a bit authoritarian for my taste.

Little House on the Prairie was a family favorite in the 1970s, but to say that I found it depressing would be an understatement. I’m probably going to get some hate mail for writing this, but I don’t let my children watch the show. It’s brutal.

For the uninitiated, here’s a recap of the show: Charles breaks his ribs falling from a tree; the Ingalls family gets swindled out of their cattle; a hailstorm ruins the family crop harvest; Charles attempts to sober-up his drunken friend; workers are blown up with dynamite; Laura becomes irate that her family dare attend a funeral instead of her birthday party; a rabid raccoon terrorizes the family chickens; Mary starts a fire in the family barn; the Ingalls newborn son dies; most of the citizens of Walnut Grove are struck with typhus, killing many of them; the Ingalls dog is run over by a wagon; once again, Charles must attempt to rehabilitate an abusive alcoholic; Charles almost dies of hypothermia. That’s season one.

“But these shows are harmless,” you may say. Maybe, but watching television not only consists of what you *are* doing, it’s what you *aren’t* doing. The irony of “family shows” is that they are programs about other people that take away from the attention that you might otherwise be giving to

your own family. In America, some fathers have a deeper friendship with fictional television characters than with members of their own families.

“But if I give up television, how will I get the news?” you ask. “I need to know what’s happening in: Zimbabwe/Estonia/Panama” or “I have to find out how that thing with: the Republican Party/ the new state law in Arizona/ the Acai crop in Brazil turned out.”

Aren’t we all “newsed-out” anyway? The news is often nothing more than a collection of the stories of the sins of others that we have no business knowing in the first place. And I don’t mean tabloid television—I mean mainstream news. “But I need to watch the news to know for whom I should pray,” some argue. But for hundreds of years, the Church has been blessed with orders of nuns and monks who prayed for the world while knowing little, if anything, of what was happening in it. Ask yourself an honest question: “When was the last time that I felt uplifted after watching the news?” Or any other television show, for that matter.

Television offers such a variety of shows, so it’s not fair to lump it all together and conclude that television is all good or all bad. After all, EWTN is on one channel while soap-operas are on the other. But Lent is a good time to-reassess the priorities in our lives. If you’re seriously addicted, try to take at least an hour off a night from television, and help your family devote this sixty minutes to God.

In one hour, you can lead your family in the Rosary, you can say the prayers that were written by St. Bridget of Sweden about the Passion of our Lord, and you can say the Stations of the Cross. At the end of this hour, you will feel uplifted, and you will have helped your family take one more spiritual step toward the celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus.

Conferences

Many state and local groups are now sponsoring their own conferences, inviting various Catholic vendors and curriculum providers. Seton is happy to participate as a vendor. For more information, see our website at www.setonhome.org/conferences, or email conferences@setonhome.org.

Covington, LA. April 2, 2011 (Sat.). Roman Catholic Home School Association of Louisiana, "Catholic Home Schooling: A Way of Life", St. Peter's Catholic Church, (St. Mary's Hall), 125 E. 19th Avenue, Covington, LA. After 8:30 AM Mass - 5 PM. Info: Beth at 985-796-1274 or 504-220-4626, or beth@montelepre.com or rchalinfo@rchal.org or www.rchal.org

PA, Harrisburg. April 2, 2011 (Sat.), 17th Annual Catholic Homeschool Conference & Curriculum Fair, Holy Name of Jesus Parish, 6190 Allentown Boulevard (Route 22 West), Harrisburg, PA. 8:30 AM - 5 PM. For information call Ellen at 717-866-5425 or email conference@catholichomeschoolpa.org or www.catholichomeschoolpa.org/ccf.html.

St. Louis, MO. April 15-16, 2011 (Fri./Sat.). 2011 St. Louis Catholic Homeschool Conference, Cardinal Rigali Center, 20 Archbishop May Drive, St. Louis, MO. Fri.: 6:00 PM-

9:00 PM (Exhibits only); Sat.: 9:00 AM -4:30 PM. Info: Cassie at 636-398-4001 or www.stlouiscatholichomeschool.com

Houston, TX. April 29-30, 2011 (Fri.-Sat.). 21st Annual Book Fair and Speakers Conference, sponsored by ARCH Catholic Homeschoolers of Houston, University of St. Thomas, 3800 Montrose Blvd., Houston, TX. Fri.: 6 PM - 9 PM; Sat.: 8 AM (Mass) - 5 PM. Info: 281-797-5578 (leave message) or info@arch-homeschool.org or www.arch-homeschool.org

Milwaukee, WI. April 29-30, 2011 (Fri.-Sat.) Celebrate the Faith 2011: Catholic Homeschool Conference and Vendor Fair, sponsored by Greater Milwaukee Catholic Home Educators (GMCHE), Thomas G. Thompson Youth Center, (State Fairgrounds - North End), 640 South 84th Street, West Allis, WI. Fri.: 3:30 PM - 9 PM; Sat.: 8 AM - 5 PM. Info: Mary-Eileen meswart@sbcglobal.net or Margharita: 262-327-6298 or www.gmche.com.

Berlin, NJ. April 30, 2011 (Sat.) 12th Annual CHAPLET Catholic Homeschool Conference, Mater Ecclesiae Roman Catholic Church, 261 Cross Keys Road, Berlin, NJ. 8 AM - 5 PM 8 AM-5 PM. Info: www.chaplet.org

Chicago, IL. May 6-7, 2011 (Fri.-Sat.) Père Marquette Home School and Parent Conference, North Central College-Residence Hall/Recreation Center, 440 South Brainard Street, Naperville, IL. Fri.: 1 PM - 9 PM; Sat.: 9 AM - 4 PM. Sponsored by the Illinois Association of Roman Catholic Home Educators (IL ARCHE). Info: TBA.

Indianapolis, IN. May 14, 2011 (Sat.). 2011 Quo Vadis Catholic Home School Conference, Holy Rosary Catholic Parish, 520 Stevens St, Indianapolis, IN. 8:30-5:00. Info: hfheindy@yahoo.com or www.hfheindy.org.

Buffalo, NY. May 21, 2011 (Sat.) 3rd Annual Buffalo Catholic Home Schooling Conference, Christ the King Seminary, 711 Knox Road, East Aurora, NY. 8 AM - 5 PM. Info: Tracy at 716-337-2337 or 716-337-2404, email buffalocatholicsc@yahoo.com or www.buffalocatholicsc.org.

Dallas, TX. May 27-28, 2011 (Fri.-Sat.) Fourth Annual Immaculate Heart of Mary North Texas Home School and Parent Conference, Arlington Convention Center, 1200 Ballpark Way, Arlington, TX. Fri. 2 PM - 8 PM, Sat. 9 AM - 4 PM. Info: 540-636-1946 or email dallas@ihmconference.org or www.ihmconference.org/northtexas

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World Day of Vocations

The work of carefully encouraging and supporting vocations finds a radiant source of inspiration in those places in the Gospel where Jesus calls his disciples to follow him and trains them with love and care. We should pay close attention to the way that Jesus called his closest associates to proclaim the Kingdom of God (cf. Lk 10:9). In the first place, it is clear that the first thing he did was to pray for them: before calling them, Jesus spent the night alone in prayer, listening to the will of the Father (cf. Lk 6:12) in a spirit of interior detachment from mundane concerns. It is Jesus' intimate conversation with the Father which results in the calling of his disciples. Vocations to the ministerial priesthood and to the consecrated life are first and foremost the fruit of constant contact with the living God and insistent prayer lifted up to the "Lord of the harvest," whether in parish communities, in Christian families or in groups specifically devoted to prayer for vocations.

At the beginning of his public life, the Lord called some fishermen on the shore of the Sea of Galilee: "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men" (Mt 4:19). He revealed his messianic mission to them by the many "signs" which showed his love for humanity and the gift of the Father's mercy. Through his words and his way of life he prepared

them to carry on his saving work. Finally, knowing "that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father" (Jn 13:1), he entrusted to them the memorial of his death and resurrection, and before ascending into heaven he sent them out to the whole world with the command: "Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations" (Mt 28:19).

It is a challenging and uplifting invitation that Jesus addresses to those to whom he says: "Follow me!" He invites them to become his friends, to listen attentively to his word and to live with him. He teaches them complete commitment to God and to the extension of his kingdom in accordance with the law of the Gospel: "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (Jn 12:24). He invites them to leave behind their own narrow agenda and their notions of self-fulfilment in order to immerse themselves in another will, the will of God, and to be guided by it. He gives them an experience of fraternity, one born of that total openness to God (cf. Mt 12:49-50) which becomes the hallmark of the community of Jesus: "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn 13:35).

Benedict XVI,
November 15, 2010